

# DNA AFTER Mrs

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Pune, Wednesday, February 3, 2010



WOMEN POWER: (from l) Chandrika Shiva, Deepa Porekar, Yogeshri Phadke, Aarti Patil, Sharmila Karve, Sujata Kulkarni, Mrinalini Kudekar

## Truly unique

Adwita saw city women from all walks of life walk the ramp and flaunt natural fabrics with complete panache.

KAVITA KANÉ explores

**A** trained architect. A professional chartered accountant. A microbiologist. A home-maker. A banker. An electrical engineer. A dermatologist. Bizarrely strewn, but woven by a common running thread — these women were a part of an unusual fashion show.

"We didn't want fashion models as the whole concept was about universality. The idea was to promote everything in natural fabric and so we used only natural fabrics. Useful and handy, they were elegant and fashionable as well — the wardrobe ranging from the day-to-day to the formal evening wear. And the models were people who were lovers of natural fabric themselves," says Neeta Deshpande, the creative brain

behind the show and the owner of the boutique Banjara.

Suitably enough, the ramp show was called Adwita which means 'unique' in Sanskrit "where the whole concept and planning was more realistic than what otherwise ramp shows are all about," smiles Neeta. "And above all, this event was dedicated to the enormous humility, talent, and creative flair of

**They were women of real substance — successful, confident, accomplished who gave personality to the clothes they wore**



— Neeta Deshpande

the skilful craftsmen of India."

If today's modern Indian woman is blazing a formidable trail in every professional sector, she continues to remain the compassionate anchor and home-maker to her family. Encapsulating this very feature were the elegant ladies who deigned to ramp walk, balancing hearth and work. "I love natural fabrics its elegant and dignified," admits Dr Swati Apte. "It was hectic, of course, and I had to manage my work schedule and family but the experience was truly unusual. I got to know women from different fields. It was a thoroughly enjoyable, learning experience."

Grappling with her twin identities, the urban woman has evolved an eclectic sense of dressing which was personalised by the 26 ladies. "We wanted real-life role models so that there is an instant sense of identification," says Neeta. Concurs Dr Jyoti Jog, "I am a scientist and was not very clued in to fashion and glamour," she smiles. "But I love

### DID YOU KNOW?

- In 1992, with a modest initial capital of a few thousand borrowed rupees, Banjara started from a 60 sq ft attic, under the canopy of a banyan tree.
- The natural fabrics sourced from Banjara were used to create outfits for the Bollywood blockbuster and Oscar nominated *Lagaan* and were designed by Oscar awardee Bhanu Athaiya.
- Joanna Lewis, a weaver-dyer and yoga exponent from Colorado, carried the story back with her to feature it in USA's leading natural fibre magazine *Fiberarts* in 2001.

natural fabrics and wanted to be a part of it."

With the market for natural fabrics growing, Neeta adds her special touch by experimenting successfully with cross-regional skills and value additions and creating extraordinarily smart ensembles. "I source the fabric from weavers and like to design and work on it," explains Neeta. "For instance, trying block printing on Chanderi, Lucknow *chikankari* on *maheshwari*, hand-painted *kalamkari* on *ajrakh*, which is so far unknown to consumers." As unusual as the fashion show she designed.

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